

*Saan a Maymaysat' Aldaw:*  
Education in Democracy, Social  
Justice, and Inclusion in Ilokano Life

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**Abstract**

The essay argues that there has been a cognitive dissonance between the country's formal education system (*adal*) and the Ilokano people's vocation to knowledge (*sursuro*). Unless this dissonance is addressed, fundamental problems relative to education in democracy, social justice, and inclusion will never be solved. The Ilokano people's sense of education—*sursuro*—shows us the way to correct that dissonance.

**Keywords:** *adal*, common good, democracy, education, *kinalinteg*, social justice, *sursuro*

The phrase “*saan a maymaysat’ aldaw*”<sup>1</sup> is the Ilokano people’s way of reckoning the limits of mechanical time, and sums up as well their understanding of the universe, the cosmos, and their social and personal relationships. It is their very act of grasping larger meanings that are beyond the reach of the clock’s seconds, minutes, and hours, and the calendar’s days, months, and years. Their sense of time is the full measure of what a “long duration” is all about—with the idea of “long” not fixed, and the idea of “duration” not confined by the dictates of the chronological. Long duration, as understood here by the Ilokanos, is fundamentally what human life is all about—a life that is linked with other life-forms and other lives. In short, for the Ilokanos, life is relational. It is also a celebration of memory, of remembering, of connections and interconnections.

Literally meaning “there is not only a single day (in our life as people),” the Ilokano phrase in the title suggests a deeper recognition that the Ilokano people are responsible not only to themselves, but to others. This responsibility is marked by their innate sense of a democratic way of life, of the structural foundations of justice needed to live in peace and prosperity

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase is double-edged: it can lead us to understand better that time is not marked by the mechanical clock and that one’s act of goodness will somehow return to the giver. But it is also a threat: if you do something terrible, karma will find its way into your life. Like the Hindu and Buddhist sense of karma, that same word in Ilokano that draws its etymology from the Sanskrit reminds us of a “possible” boomerang of one’s bad actions. We can hear an echo that runs like this: “*Saan a maymaysat’ aldaw. Agurayka laeng ta makitam*” (There is not only a single day in our life as a people. Just wait and you will see.)

among themselves and with others, and of the vocation to be involved and engaged with the community where they find themselves. In their pursuit of a just life, the problems that relate to what Carlos et al. have termed as “deficits of democracy”<sup>2</sup> are defined collegially, communally, and critically in an effort to draw up solutions to problems that relate to their public life. How the Ilokanos today seem to have lost that capacity to be attentive to the participatory requisites of collective life, to the demands of justice and fairness, and to the urgency of inclusion needs revisiting. I hope that the re-visitation of these realities that have receded into their collective unconscious will help make the Ilokanos remember again, their act of remembering also affirming their “re-membering”—their becoming members again—of their community.

The receding of this kind of collective reality is caused by several factors, but one of them is the kind of formal education that has been imposed upon the Ilokano people, and by extension, upon all the various ethnolinguistic groups of the country. These ethnolinguistic groups are by

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<sup>2</sup> Clarita Carlos et al., *Democratic Deficits in the Philippines: What is To Be Done?* (Quezon City: Center for Political and Democratic Reform, Inc.; Makati: Konrad Adenauer Foundation; and Davao: Centrist Democratic Movement, 2010). Carlos et al. are clear in their definition of “democratic deficits” as the areas of our collective and political life “where democracy has failed us” (14). They offered a way to address these deficits by reminding the three branches of government to pursue their mandates, with (a) “strong political leaders from the top” and (b) “collective political will that must be harnessed from the citizenry” (1).

themselves veritably “first nations”—a fact that has been gradually erased in the education of all the people of the Philippines.<sup>3</sup> Except for a token, almost nominalist recognition of the “Philippine Other,” the whole gamut of formal Philippine education is Manila-centric, imperial, and hegemonic.

Somewhere, the formal education system of the country has not been able to plumb the richness of the cultural and collective experiences of the citizenry.<sup>4</sup> Instead, it imposed and continues to impose a consumerist model of formal education<sup>5</sup> based not on care and compassion that must be the real mark of civilization and culture but on unrestrained consumption of goods and services. It is a formal education that has deprived every Ilokano of that timeless adage about the days of our life—that there is not only a single day for us all but many and that we are all duty-bound to be caring and to be compassionate for all the days that we have.

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<sup>3</sup> I have discussed this at length in the essay, “With this MTB-MLE Turn, Now We Make the Road While Walking,” in *Pagsasao: Our Languages for Our Children* (Honolulu: TMI Global Press, 2017), 207–233.

<sup>4</sup> Jose Mario D. De Vega argues for “creativity” as a key component in an education that matters to people. That creativity is harnessed when we recognize the fact of diversity and plurality. If the education remains a “one-size, fits-all” model, the same problems will remain, with the inability of the formal educational system to go creative, go compassionate, go inclusive. And more: to go back to the communities and serve the people of these communities. See, de Vega, “The State of Education Today: A Discourse on the Destruction of Creativity,” in, *Insurrecto* (Quezon City: Central Books, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> See Leonardo Estioko, *History of Education: A Filipino Perspective* (Manila: Logos Publications, 1994).

Somewhere too, in the frenzy to look at the nation-state from the lens of a “nation” that is imperial and exclusionist, the “sub-nation” or the “nation within that nation” has been extinguished by the very forces of formal education defined by the cultural apparatus of that nation-state.

One of the sub-nations is the “Ilokano nation.” As early as the 1940s, Camilo Osias, in his inspired view of nation-building, declared that there is an Ilokano nation<sup>6</sup> and thus, there are other nations within what he deemed as the larger Philippine “nation-state.” The recognition of the facticity of diversity and plurality was foremost in his mind. This idea of an Ilokano nation (and technically, within the framework of a Philippine nation-state) would be affirmed and re-affirmed by advocacy groups and by political leaders, including Carlos Padilla and the Nakem Conferences.<sup>7</sup>

I will argue that the current state of formal education in the country misses the point in educating the Ilokanos in the morally right path to civics and citizenship, a path that makes them eternally remember who they are. It is only in that act of remembering themselves and affirming who they are that they can have a reason to struggle for the good life, to see

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<sup>6</sup> I have discussed the history of the phrase or concept in the essay, “Retrieving Ilokano Mind from the Margins,” in *Pagsasao: Our Languages for Our Children* (Honolulu: TMI Global, 2017), 62–113.

<sup>7</sup> Representative Carlos Padilla, keynote address at the 2007 Nakem Conference on “Imagining the Ilokano and Amianan Nation,” Saint Mary’s University, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, 28–30 May 2008. Padilla affirms the Osias concept of the “Ilokano nation” in his keynote address.

things more clearly in the round, and to come to a consciousness that matters, because it is also about themselves. I will also argue that in the collective life of the Ilokano, people are “hidden” realities that have been drowned out by this business of “nationalism” centered on nothing but the center of power—Imperial Manila.<sup>8</sup> To date, there seems to be this equation between this Imperial Manila and the entire country: when Imperial Manila sneezes, the entire country gets the flu or worse, pneumonia or the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 phenomenon that has led to what I call our collective “Covidized” life is proof of this “covert imperialism” that has touched on the education of the Ilokans and by extension, practically every Filipino.

In an earlier work, I have argued that the Philippine educational system needs to renew itself.

The whole history of Philippine basic education—and equally worse, Philippine higher education—is a history of struggle for the recognition of, and respect for, our cultural and linguistic rights as a people from the peripheries of a land appropriated by the hegemonic center

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<sup>8</sup> I have lengthily discussed this concept of “Imperial Manila” in “Retrieving Ilokano Mind from the Margins,” in *Pagsasao: Our Languages for Our Children* (Honolulu: TMI Global, 2017), 62–113. The operational definition—the over-centralization of institutional decision affecting the entire country—is something that I have drawn up from many sources particularly: David Martinez, *A Country of Our Own. Partitioning the Philippines* (Los Angeles, CA: Bisaya Books, 2004) and Gideon Lasco, “Imperial Manila,” *Inquirer.net*, December 28, 2015, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/91545/imperial-manila>.

for reasons that are never ours. Up until today, it is a struggle fraught with the vagaries of education regimes that run the gamut from the faddish to the imitative—from what is the newest theory from the West to what we can do to follow the Western educators and validate, in our local settings, what they are talking about. It has been an educational set-up that has left us with a tacit knowledge: if it were not from the West it does not have any validity, meaning, and relevance.<sup>9</sup>

In this essay, I contextualize this Ilokano phrase in the title in light of three other “educational” areas of concern in the everyday life of the Ilokano people: (a) democracy; (b) social justice; and (c) inclusion. In approaching these three areas, I am guided by a number of concepts such as: *panagpupurok*,<sup>10</sup> *dap-ayan*, and *dapon* to account for the Ilokano democratic practice of education; *banata*, *ammuyo*, *bataris*, *zanjera*, *tagnawa*, and *kinalinteg* to account for the concept of social justice; and *kayyamet* (or its metathesis, *kammayet*) to account for inclusion. From here, I shall argue that there is so

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<sup>9</sup> “With This MLE Turn, Now We Make the Road While Walking: Our Task at Nakem and at The UH Ilokano Program Until 2015,” Conference paper presented at the first Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, Capitol University, Cagayan de Oro City, February 18–20, 2020, <https://aureliosagcaoili.com/2010/02/17/mle-turn-2/>. This essay was published in Agcaoili, *Pagyasao*.

<sup>10</sup> From here on, all Ilokano terms are italicized for the first time they are used; otherwise, they shall be considered ordinary words the moment these are mentioned again.

much to be desired in Philippine formal education (*adal*) and in the purposeful return to the indigenous ways of self-understanding and of coming to knowledge (*sursuro*) that is necessary and an ethical obligation.

I shall distinguish two forms of knowing as realities in the life of the Ilokano: (a) *adal* and (b) *sursuro*. I will argue that the Ilokano's critical knowledge of the fact that there are other days in the life a person and that a day does not begin and end only now leads the Ilokano to an understanding of the "here-and-now," a sense of the present that includes the future in that ever-collapsing view of human time: the "there-and-tomorrow" that is located within the present-qua-present. The real education, thus, for the Ilokano, is not simply in the *adal*, the formal one and picked up from the nation-state's school system, but in the *sursuro*, the one that gets into the head, into the heart, into the consciousness, into that commitment to care for others and for the environment, and into that keen grasping of the meaning of the word to understand the world—the one that comes from history, from the ancestors, from the community itself. The Ilokano statement, "*Adda adalna ngem awan sursurona*" (s/he has a formal education and has the academic degree but lacks knowledge), is the worst verdict that could ever be said about a person. Following this kind of logic, the person who has *sursuro* recognizes the other in the celebration and performance of public life, cares for the other, and commits to found a community that pursues the common good. The



Ilokano regulative ideal is this: having adal and having sursuro at the same time. In that complementation, we get to see a person, a human being who knows and who cares.

***Ilokano Life: The Urban in the Rural,  
the Rural in the Urban***

Except for those living in small cities (as compared to metropolitan cities like Cebu, Davao, and Manila), Ilokano life until today continues to be marked by a certain rural feel—that seeming division of people between those who live in these small urbanized areas and those who continue to live in the farms (or barrios), the rural areas outside these urban centers. The rush to citification has not caught on with the traditional administrative region of the Ilocos. Today, the region’s cities remain a handful. Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Abra, and Pangasinan originally comprised what was called Inner Ilocos, or *Ilokos Makin-ung*. With Abra joining the Cordillera Administrative Region, Inner Ilocos is now left with the four provinces that meander along the shores of what is now called the West Philippine Sea. The idea of an “outer Ilocos” (or *Ilokos Makin-ruar*) stems from the outward migration of the Ilokanos who became settlers (or “homesteaders” following an older term) in Cagayan, Isabela, Tarlac, Zambales, Nueva Ecija, Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya, Aurora, Quezon, Mindoro, Palawan, some parts of the Visayas particularly in Cebu, and many parts of Mindanao. Known in some other analyses as the Ilokano diaspora, this

outward migration would also see the Ilokano crossing the Pacific and settling in the plantations of Hawaii, in the farmlands of California and Washington, and in the canneries of Alaska. This Ilokano exodus began at the early part of the American colonial period, in 1906, at a time when the people of the Philippines were regarded as nationals but not citizens of the United States.<sup>11</sup>

***Learning Democracy in the Panagpupurok,  
Dap-ay, and Dapon***

The portmanteau, democracy, does not exist in the older Ilokano vocabulary about their political and societal life. The lexicographer, Carl Ralph Rubino, working from the Vanoverbergh translation of the Carro Ilokano-Castellano dictionary of 1888, lists “*demokrasia*” and translates it into Ilokano as “*wayawaya*.”<sup>12</sup> This is a mistake: democracy is not freedom, even if as a political ideal, it is its intent. The long history of use and abuse by countries, states, nations, and nation-states of “democracy” leads us to question whether it is indeed equal to freedom as suggested by Rubino. Some countries even call themselves a democracy even if in reality

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<sup>11</sup> See for instance, Marcelino A. Foronda Jr., *Dallang: An Introduction to Philippine Literature in Ilokano and Other Essays* (Honolulu: Philippine Studies/Asian Studies Program, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1978); Marcelino A. Jr. and Juan A. Foronda, *Samtoy: Essays on Iloko Culture and History* (Manila: United Publishing Co., Inc., 1972); Rubén Alcántara, *Sakada: Filipino Adaptation in Hawaii* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> Carl Ralph Rubino, *Ilokano Dictionary and Grammar: Ilokano-English/English-Ilokano* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 162.

theirs is a form of authoritarianism, dictatorship, fascism, or tyranny.

If we see democracy as some form of self-government—or that act of people (or the *demos*: masses) of finding out ways to govern themselves in their own terms—then it is not freedom. Freedom is its end. Following this line of thought, we explore the various practices of Ilokanos in educating themselves in democracy and in performing the demands of democracy itself.

The Ilokanos, living in villages they call “*purok*,” turned this place-name into a political act of governance and called this *panagpupurok*. The resulting noun is literally a nominalized word: *panag-* (a processual prefix) and *purok*, the *punget-a-ramut* (PAR, the root or stem). Literally, it is the process of doing or performing the *purok*, which is both the village itself and the coming into a gathering in the place in order to decide on matters concerning the community.

The *barangay*,<sup>13</sup> badly written and pronounced today with the invisible geminated ‘g’ but was, among Ilokanos, pronounced with the ‘ng,’ recalibrates the *purok* as the smallest political entity of a local government. The abusive, kleptocratic Marcos Regime from 1965 to 1986 destroyed the *purok* and its system of governance. It offered a new way of doing things in the *barangay* and the *barangay* meeting, with

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<sup>13</sup> This is one of the Ilokano indigenous boats. The people used the *abel* (the Ilokano weave) for its sails.

the barangay now headed by a political leader oftentimes allied or in cahoots with the ruling power.

The core of democracy as a “rule by the people” in the panagpupurok is the participation of *pumurok* (the people of the purok) in the decision-making process. The process is as important as the result; it is both practical and symbolic. And always, it is representative. It is consensual.

The symbolic aspect begins with the sounding of the *tangguyob* (variant of *angnguyob*, a trumpet from the horn of a mature carabao) by the person assigned to sound it. The purok has but only one official tangguyob-trumpeter and no other person can sound it off. That position of a trumpeter is both a position of trust and a privilege as it is also one of prestige. The tangguyob-trumpeter goes around the purok sounding off the trumpet. At the sound of the horn, all members of the community are expected to go to the *dap-ay* (or *dap-ayan*) or the *dapon* (or *pagdadaponan*) for the assembly.<sup>14</sup> Those gathered, the *pumurok*, are expected to contribute their ideas in understanding and resolving the issue

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<sup>14</sup> This is fairly common in many parts of the Amianan including the various indigenous groups in Kailokuan, in the Cordilleras, and in the Cagayan Valley Region where many Ilokano have settled. Both *dap-ay* and *dapon* refer to the event; the *dap-ayan* and *daponan* refer to the site of the event. The politicized barrio—or eventually the barangay—evolved to what is now called the “barrio hall,” an older term, and the “barangay hall,” the more contemporary term courtesy of the political program of Marcos’s New Society. This has remained the same today, unpurged, and reinforced, making the Ilokano people everywhere unable to remember where those concepts are rooted. In the older times prior to the dictatorship, these gathering places were called “*pagdadap-ayan*” (or simply *dap-ayan*) or *pagdadanonan*.

at hand. The *panglakayen*, the elder, leads the democratic process; he cannot make decisions, but allows the process for discussion and resolution to come about. He facilitates; he does not decide. In some other panagpupurok practice, the *gimbal*, the community drum, is beaten. Like the tangguyob-trumpeter, the gimbal-beater goes around the purok and constantly beats his drum made of hardwood and choice leather from the purok's cattle.

***Committing Oneself to Social Justice:  
The Ammuyo, Banata, Bataris, Kinalinteg,  
Tagnawa, and Zanjera Experience***<sup>15</sup>

Leonardo Mercado's "elements of Filipino philosophy" looked into the first three bigger ethnolinguistic groups of the country. Through metalinguistic analysis, he put together what he called the backbone of a possible "national" philosophy<sup>16</sup>, an offshoot of the brainwashing technique of the New Society project of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

There are extra-metalinguistic variables embedded in Mercado's project including, for instance, that almost mantric idea of "isang bansa, isang diwa" (one nation, one thought),

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<sup>15</sup> Franz Krauze, "Communal Management of a Common-Pool Resource: Zanjera Irrigation in the Philippines," (master's thesis, University of Manchester, 2004) [https://www.academia.edu/8992059/Communal\\_Management\\_of\\_a\\_Common-Pool\\_Resource\\_Zanjera\\_Irrigation\\_in\\_the\\_Philippines](https://www.academia.edu/8992059/Communal_Management_of_a_Common-Pool_Resource_Zanjera_Irrigation_in_the_Philippines). See also, Carlos D. Isles, "The 'Zanjas' of Ilocos Norte," *Inquirer.net*, November 4, 2015. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/90020/the-zanjas-of-ilocos-norte>.

<sup>16</sup> Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tagbilaran City: Divine Word Publications, 1974).

with the idea of the “diwa” (thought) subsuming all the 196 ethnolinguistic communities of the country.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps, the philosopher, Mercado, did not see that. Those were the 70s, the triumphalist years of the New Society when the Marcos men and women were all preoccupied with all the social and intellectual re-engineering of that time. In those difficult and fuzzy days, it could have been hard to sieve through the official maze produced and orchestrated by the “bright boys and some girls” of the Marcos dictatorial regime.

One of the many abbreviations of the *isang-bansa-isang-diwa* mode of educating the citizenry is the imposition of one “national” language for the sake of “national” unity and cohesion. The subtext, of course, is the unnamed fear of the Philippine Other—those who do not speak the language of Imperial Manila. The longer tongue-twisting original formation at the start of Martial Law, “*isang bansa, isang diwa, isang wika*” (one nation, one thought, one language), cut to what we have been brainwashed into swallowing even until today. The swallowing—hook, line, and sinker—of the ideological phrase was by way of Philippine formal education, as reflected in the New Society curriculum. The state’s ideological apparatus, of course, framed the curriculum and made it sure that the indoctrination was complete. Today, it has remained the same. We have not substantially changed in terms of curricular directions with the insistence of “nationalist” ideologues of reintroducing more “Filipino”

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<sup>17</sup> See Agcaoili, *Pagsasao*.

courses into the General Education curriculum in tertiary education despite the added two years of “Filipino” courses in the senior high school curriculum, courtesy of Republic Act 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education initiative of the government.<sup>18</sup> The age-old, rehashed reason is uncreative: national unity and cohesion. The ideologues conveniently forget that what binds a nation is a larger, more powerful language: the language of democracy, of social justice, and inclusion. Ethnocide—in the form of culturicide and linguicide—is being marketed as that: national unity and national cohesion. It has remained the same today.

The other educational tool—an imagery—is that of “*bayanihan*” that almost masculine language on a canvas of men carrying a hut for transfer to another place. There are no women in this canvas and their absence was never questioned. The *bayani* (the hero for the Tagalog) is a man—and will always be so.

However, the Ilokanos think and do things differently. They had done the carrying of a hut and had the hut transferred to another place. But that is not all they have done. The linguistic and practical artifacts of their communal life suggest to us other expressions of that solidarity with others—that societal relations that are part and parcel of how they understood themselves in both the parameters of adal

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<sup>18</sup> Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, Republic Act 10533, Philippine Gazette, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/05/15/republic-act-no-10533/>. May 15, 2013.

and sursuro. They have the (a) *ammuyo*, (b) *banata*, (c) *bataris*, (d) *kinalinteg*, (e) *tagnawa*, and (f) *zanjera* to express their understanding of parity and equity—and of offering one’s person, service, and abilities to those who are in need.

The *ammuyo*, *bataris*, and *tagnawa* belong to the same cluster. *Banata* stands by itself; and *zanjera* tells us of a collectivized way of life of the farming Ilokanos, with the fair sharing of water needed to produce food for themselves and others.

In *ammuyo*, there is this act of the whole community gathered together to work for the good of the community. In *bataris*, one can ask for help from others to work for you for free. When the others ask you in kind, you are duty-bound to return the favor you received. In *tagnawa*, a project is done, but all those involved in the project are expected to put in their own resources for the project to be realized. This is the age-old form of what is now technically called the “cooperative” form of economic production. This is how this sense of *bayanihan* comes about, in many strokes, all for the good of the community.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> On this note, it is appropriate to document what some groups of Ilokano writers have been doing since the 1960s. With the hegemonic practice of the nation-state in the area of education and cultural production, with “regional literature” always being an afterthought to exhausting practically all the literatures of the center branded as “national” literature, there is no resource left for the other forms of cultural expressions, expressions in another language outside English and Tagalog (also known as P/Filipino depending on which time one is referring to). Through the leadership of Juan SP Hidalgo, Jr. and other Ilokano visionaries, the writers started to publish their own books written in Ilokano following the “*tagnawa*” model: they pool their resources to pay for each page



In *zanjera*, the farmers are joined together by a single purpose: that each would have the chance to get his share of the water for his farm. There is a nonformal organization here, with its set of leaders selected out of competence, ability, and integrity and not under any formal organization administered by the local government. The *zanjera* system, from the Spanish “*zanja*” (meaning “ditch” or “irrigation canal”), has remained one of the enduring water-sharing systems of the Ilokano people.<sup>20</sup> With an estimated 2,000 *zanjeras* in the entire Amianan, this will continue to be the means of equipping the Ilokano with the right education for water conservation, sustainable farming, and cooperative ways of doing what is best for their interests.

In the *banata*, there is this clear-cut definition of what a person can and cannot do, with the one that he cannot do understood along the lines of common goods. Others could call this communal property, with everyone having access to it. Today, *banata* remains a social institution for cohesion and sharing among Ilokano communities.<sup>21</sup>

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their works consume. Through this effort, the Ilokano language, and its twin, Ilokano literature, continues to be alive today while many other Philippine languages are either dead or dying or simply peripheralized completely. The case of the Kapampangan language is a case in point: very few now speak and practically no one writes in it any longer except language advocates that have fought for the survival and thriving of their language.

<sup>20</sup> Isles, “The ‘Zanjeras’ of Ilocos Norte.”

<sup>21</sup> Data is based on interviews and field work in Bacsil, Laoag City. Foremost of the informants that I have had the good fortune of interviewing for many years for other research works is Rizal Aguilar, now in his 80s and who still spends some of his time in Bacsil after his retirement from his work in Hawaii. My interviews with him started in 2006 when I moved to Honolulu, Hawaii from

The object of the banata is usually the hills or parts of the forest that people can never claim. These are all under the community. There, in these hills or forests, people could gather firewood, collect food, hunt animals, or cut down trees for posts in building one's hut. Nothing could be sold from this banata; everything is for home consumption. In this set-up, the community can sustain itself for years until today.

The Ilokano sense of justice is rooted in the idea of "straightness," that quality of something "moving uniformly in one direction." There is no curve here. It cannot be crooked, bent, twisted, or distorted. The PAR *linteg* is a noun that gives rise to other words, either nouns, verbs, or adjectives.

Kinalinteg is this other abstraction to this straightness of things. This quality defines what is just, what is fair, what is socially acceptable in accord with a set of social norms or regulative ideals. The adjective "nalinteg" is itself a judgment, a result of an evaluation. This can be intensified to *nakalinlinteg* (so just, so fair, so straight), or the obligatory *lintegen* or *manglinteg* (make it straight).

In the Ilokano sense of things, linteg comes in full force. Depending on the set of circumstances, it can apply to both the human positive laws (for instance, the law of political or other formal organizations), the natural laws, or the moral

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Los Angeles, California. Many visits to Bacsil have given me familiarity with the banata social institution.

and ethical laws. In this light, we can draft a number of possibilities for what this linteg as law is: (a) “*linteg ti il*” (the law of the community or town), (b) “*linteg ti lubong*” (the law of the world), or (c) “*linteg ti aramid*” (the law of our human actions). In the everyday life of the Ilokanos, the *prima facie* evidence makes sense. Abstractions of positive laws are regarded as ideals, but the Ilokano can easily sense what is wrong when he sees it. Right or correctness is equivalent to that which is straight. These are the very things that govern the ethical conduct of the Ilokano in his education in social justice. Parity is primeval. Your Torrens title—your claim to private property—came with the colonizers and was blessed by John Locke the philosopher. Your claim to individual rights stops when the banata begins or when the common good needs to be pursued.

### **One-ing With Others: *The Kammayet/Kayyamet***

The education in solidarity, in the care for others, and in compassion are subsumed under what could be understood as *kammayet* (or its variant, a metathesis, *kayyamet*). In the *kammayet*, we imagine here a community of people gathered together in celebration and in grief, in victory and in tragedy, in struggle and in hope for a better day. I have taken the liberty to translate the dynamic meaning of the *kammayet* as *one-ing*, the word “one” (in English) inflected to account for the verb.

This is the same kayyamet that has led people to deal with the abstract, and take back this abstraction and site it in the everydayness of the people's lives, of want and need, of fighting for their rights, and of siding with the *mangurkuranges* <sup>22</sup> (the poor and the oppressed and the marginalized). There is no neutral position in the act of articulating this kayyamet. Either one sides with those who needed help or not at all. We stay in the middle; we side with the oppressor. A choice has to be made with finality. There are no ifs or buts.

The continuing resistance of the Amianan peoples to the encroachment of private corporations (many of these are partly owned by foreigners in accordance with the requirements of the Philippine Constitution of 1987 on ancestral lands, an encroachment approved by the government in the name of national development) is rooted in that unnamed reverence the Amianan peoples have for the land as a physical resource and as a deity. Many of those who have joined this resistance from the Ilokano Katipuneros until the kleptocratic Marcos regime have been jailed, butchered, killed, their bodies buried on unmarked graves. Father Nilo Valerio, Resteta Fernandez, and Soledad Salvador were martyred in Bakun (in Benguet). They were initially buried in shallow graves. They were then dug up by those who killed them and were re-buried elsewhere. Their remains

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<sup>22</sup> Literally those “lacking in, or deprived of, breath,” with “ease in breathing” as one of the social barometers of the good life.

have never been found. The priest, Father Nilo was beheaded. His head put on a bamboo stake and displayed at the municipal hall for the public to see and to serve as a warning.<sup>23</sup> There have been more of them after EDSA People Power I or even after Marcos had gone. The structures of oppression have remained the same, with the oligarchs mouthing platitudes about democracy, lording over the lives of marginalized peoples of the land.

The warnings in the killing of resisters and the beheading of some were univocal, the ones giving the warnings had guns. But the resistance, until today, has not stopped. The masses might not have the elite form of the *adal*, but they have the substantive *sursuro* about what is just and fair in life.

All other forms of resistance by the Ilokanos have largely been a result of this sense of the *kammayet*, this sense of solidarity—a lesson in the abstract that takes its shape and form and articulation among the people that live. They live because they resist, and they resist because they dream of the good life, the *naimbag a biag*.

### ***A Relationship with the Multiverse***

There is no doubt that the Ilokanos are “people of the earth”—with that exaggerated reference to the soil stuck under their fingernails (“*adda daga kadagiti kukoda*”). Largely rural with the exception of a few cities they have built, cities

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<sup>23</sup> Edgar Maranan, *Bakun: Three Martyrs for the People* (Philippines: Bakun Martyrs Committee, 1987).

that are veritably on steroids, the Ilokanos have stuck to the earth as the earth has been embedded in their hands.

It is in this relationship that we see the Ilokanos talking about the dichotomy of *adal* and *sursuro*: the *adal* the formal knowledge gained from attending classes in schools and the *sursuro* born of mindfulness of the limitless possibilities of life and of cultivating the earth.

The Ilokanos have ascribed some divinity to the earth, calling it *Apo Daga*, Lord Earth, or Earth that is Divine, Almighty, Master. This reverential attitude leads us to understand the impossibility of “owning the land.” Like the rest of the Amianan peoples that are all conscious of their “smallness” in the face of the earth and the universe, no person can ever “own” land.<sup>24</sup> Instead, *ceteris paribus*, it is the land that owns people, with the soil repossessing them—claiming them back—in death. They are fully aware of this: they will return to the earth in due time, and in due time, they will become earth once again.

For the Ilokano, the earth is alive. It is a breathing, growing reality, all-encompassing, and mysterious. There are other entities that reside in the forest, in the river, in the hills, in the meadows, and in solitary, remote places. Thus, it is wise to protect and not harm them. Co-existence is key to

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<sup>24</sup> See for instance the encounter between Apo Macliing Dulag and the soldiers. In that encounter, the *apo pangat*—the head of the tribe—simply told the soldiers: “No one owns a [*sit*] land. It is the land that owns people.” This is common knowledge among the people of the Amianan: “*tagikuaennaka ni Apo Daga*” (Lord Earth owns you.)

this mode of surviving with the nonhuman entities—the *di-katatawan*.<sup>25</sup>

There are several ways to maintain this peaceful and productive co-existence: (1) ask permission and (2) be mindful that there are others out there and that you have an obligation to appease them if you accidentally hurt them. Scholars trained in the West or trained by Western-oriented educators talk of “superstitious” practices here. But this has yet to be understood whether these so-called superstitious practices are not, in fact, part of a broader understanding of reality especially that reality that has not yet been taxonomized by the instruments and methods of formal education.

***Arayat, Ayuda, Karidad, Tulong<sup>26</sup> and Paburiraw,  
Padawat, Padigo<sup>27</sup>***

These synonymous terms, while taking their roots from three distinct experiences, talk of the Ilokano trait where individuals “give away their goods and resources for

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<sup>25</sup> Isabelo De los Reyes, *El Folklore Filipino* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1994). De los Reyes made a mistake here: it should be “di-katatawan” (or di-katatoan, in Castellano) and not “*katatawan*.”

<sup>26</sup> The following corroborated the various acts of the Ilokano people in freely giving away their resources and the goods they have to their neighbors and to other members of their community who were in need while the COVID-19 pandemic was at its height: Dr. Rosabel Acosta (San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte), Milalyn Reyes Marcelo (Dingras, Ilocos Norte), Carmi Polendey Lorenzo (Batac and Pinili, Ilocos Norte), Jonathan Macatbag (Iglesia Filipino Independiente), and Errol Abrew (Caba, La Union). Their accounts and corroboration via Facebook’s private messenger were collected on April 26, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> These are important concepts in the education of the Ilokano as an ethical agent.

free.”<sup>28</sup> Even during the outbreak of the infectious disease, COVID-19, that became a pandemic, causing either community quarantine procedures or lockdowns in the Philippines and in many parts of the world, concern for people who do not have the means to survive during the community quarantine had already been evident. Help came left and right, even from better-off neighbors.<sup>29</sup>

In those four terms (*arayat*, *ayuda*, *karidad*, *tulong*) that somehow overlap, two are remnants of the Ilokano colonial experience under the Spaniards: “ayuda” and “karidad” (help and charity). The two indigenous terms, “arayat” and “tulong,” are Austronesian—relics of the ancient ways of people that have come to the Ilocos shores and calling themselves Ilokanos because they decided to live in the coves, the shorelines, and the depressed portions of that terrain we call the Kailokuan.

Arayat is used in situations when people are in dire straits or in dire need of help; there is that quality of a “hasty giving of assistance.” Tulong is a broader term, applied to even ordinary situations where we give aid or assistance to someone. We bring in the situation of the

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<sup>28</sup> Coming from a variety of *punget-a-ramut a balikas* (PAR: stem-root words), the overall meaning of these three words would best be: “giving away for free.” The PAR noun forms (*buriran*, *dawat*, and *digo*) are all different experiences, but with the various possibilities of the affix ‘pa-’, the resulting inflection changes the dynamics of the new words.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Lydia Abajo Pavon is based in Honolulu, Hawaii, but who is aware of what happened within their own community in Rancho, Santa, Ilocos Sur (March 31, 2020). The aid-giving continues until today.



mangurkuranges and we deal with arayat. Karidad here is in the form of alms for those going around asking for help. The Ilokanos would remind themselves: “*Nasaysayaat ti mangted ngem ti dumawat*” (It is far better to give than to ask for help.)<sup>30</sup>

Some forms of help could be the *paburiraw*, the *padawat*, or the *padigo*. Synonymous in many ways even if they come from differing foundational PAR, they all point to that act of “giving away goods (or services) for free” without expecting anything in return. The PAR for paburiraw is *buriraw*, giving away for free. Padawat, on the other hand, is *dawat*, the act of asking, which means “giving away to the one asking” when inflected with the prefix “*pa-*.” Padigo takes its form from something more fundamental, referencing the soup, *digo*. Thus, it is the sharing of the soup, your soup, with your neighbor. Until today, the padigo, literally and as a mode of sharing, is still being done in the Ilocos. The term is being used whether one is sharing a soupy viand (or dish) or something else.

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<sup>30</sup> Among Ilokanos in the diasporic communities where the state has a welfare system, you have practically sold your honor, dignity, and name if you are caught with a welfare check or its other forms. To them, this is unthinkable: either the Ilokano is so lazy to work or so undignified that he has the gumption to get enlisted in the government’s welfare program. I have seen this in my work in Los Angeles, California; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Honolulu, Hawaii from 2003 to 2020.

***Adal, Sursuro, and the Many Days  
in the Life of a Person:  
Lessons from the Inarticulate***

When we think of the Ilokanos steeped in the lessons of democracy, social justice, and inclusion, we think of them as having adal and sursuro rolled into one. Both are forms of education, with adal a formal education and with sursuro in the form of precepts. In a dichotomized way of life, a person can have adal without having sursuro. The reverse could be true: a person has sursuro but lacks adal. This second one is preferred in decision making.

The ideal for an educated Ilokano is one with both adal and sursuro, with his adal reinforcing his sursuro and vice versa. This reinforcement leads the educated Ilokano to be mindful of his vocation to include others in the spirit of the good life marked and touched by real and substantive democracy as well as real and substantive social justice.

Presently, the structure of Philippine formal education is one of cognitive dissonance: it is unable to appreciate the versions of truth and meaning of the country's diverse peoples, communities, and experiences. It is always-already succumbing to the seductions of neoliberalist forms of education that turns students into unthinking, uncritical workers of unrestrained capital and thus, unable to learn from their communities and peoples. For them, there seems to be no good lessons from the soiled hands, fingers, and

fingerprints of their people.<sup>31</sup> Working from home is the new normal. We forget that someone's hands must be soiled to feed those working from home.

“Saan a maymaysat’ aldaw” says that the inarticulate, the masses that toil the soil and operate the land, are expectantly awaiting the coming of the harvest season. The enduring and resilient power of these masses with the sursuro teaches us many things: to have real adal, one must have sursuro. Adal is the bonus. Sursuro makes us human, makes us real people, and makes us committed workers for democracy, social justice, and inclusion.

Sursuro always makes us remember who we are—people who are educated by their ancestors, by the earth, by history, and by life itself. Hopefully, this is achieved by the state's formal educational system that is mindful because it is oriented toward freedom and the good life for all.

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<sup>31</sup> Freire's sense of critical consciousness and formation of one among the educatees and the educators themselves is relevant here. The capacity of the people—the masses in particular—to come into a dialogue, into a symmetrical communication, empowers them to own the language that defines their problem and helps them articulate the most democratic and productive solutions. See, Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). See also his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

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